United Nations E/AC.51/2017/L.4/Add.16

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: Limited
28 June 2017

Original: English

Committee for Programme and Coordination
Fifty-seventh session
5-30 June 2017
Agenda item 7
Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-seventh session

Draft report

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Addendum

Programme questions: evaluation
(*Item 3 (b)*)

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the thematic evaluation of the regional commissions

1. At its 6th meeting, on 7 June 2017, the Committee for Programme and Coordination considered the report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) on the thematic evaluation of the regional commissions (E/AC.51/2017/8).

2. The Assistant Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services introduced the report and, together with representatives of OIOS and the Regional Commissions New York Office, responded to questions raised during its consideration by the Committee.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed their appreciation and support for the report and its recommendations. They also noted their appreciation for the work of the regional commissions in providing statistical support to the Member States in their respective regions, in particular in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

4. Delegations expressed agreement in recognizing that multiple actors and partners were involved in providing statistical support to Member States and noted that it was important to enhance synergies and cooperation in that regard between the regional commissions and with other entities in the United Nations system. In that context, information was sought on possible measures to increase the frequency

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and quality of the exchange of knowledge between the regional commissions and the Statistics Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs.

5. Information was sought on how the report and the recommendations contained therein aligned with the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the recommendations and decisions made in that context. Information was also sought about the use of the phrase "key statistics". Highlighting the three dimensions of the 2030 Agenda, namely economic, social and environmental, a delegation stressed the need to treat the three dimensions equally and, therefore, cautioned against the use of terms such as "key statistics", for which no legislative mandate existed. Similarly, in reference to paragraph 18 of the report and the "Statistics for Transparency, Accountability and Results: A Busan Action Plan for Statistics" mentioned therein, a delegation, while not questioning that document itself, expressed reservations about using accords and agreements negotiated outside the framework of the United Nations as references in the reports discussed by the Committee.

6. Delegations expressed agreement on the importance of having statistics and open and accessible data as an essential component of promoting sustainable development and the Goals, as well as the importance of the regional commissions in enhancing Member State statistical capacity. The need to further focus on the dissemination and use of statistics was emphasized, and information was sought on the types of activities that could be undertaken to enhance the use and sharing of statistics to more widely inform decision-making.

7. Clarification was sought on what appeared to be an inconsistency between the statistical support needs of countries and the relatively low amount of resources spent on capacity-building and technical assistance for the modernization of statistics.

8. Appreciation was expressed for the important work done by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the statistical capacities of the region, which had been fully reported on in a previous evaluation.

9. A number of delegations stressed the importance of dedicating sufficient resources to the development of capacity for data dissemination, gathering and analysis at the national level. A delegation further stressed that, to properly channel technical assistance to Member States, it was necessary to empower the United Nations by allocating regular budgetary resources to related activities rather than relying principally on extrabudgetary resources. Several delegations emphasized the finite nature of resources and expressed the view that there was significant scope to use existing resources through enhanced collaboration between the regional commissions, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations country teams and all development actors, and stressed the need to reprioritize activities in support of the 2030 Agenda. In that regard, a delegation sought information on how the regional commissions were adapting to the new reality of the 2030 Agenda and how they were reprioritizing activities.

10. With regard to recommendation 1, a delegation stressed the importance of capacity at the national level and noted that it would have been appropriate to include other elements, namely "ownership of States on statistics collection" and "statistics culture".

11. Reference was made to recommendation 2, which highlighted the need to include actions to secure supplementary resources, and it was stressed that, while it was within the prerogative of OIOS to make a judgment on resources, the Committee did not have a mandate to discuss budgetary questions. In that regard,

clarification was sought on how the Committee should deal with the recommendation without encroaching on the mandate of the Fifth Committee.

12. With regard to recommendation 5, a delegation suggested that the recommendation in the report encouraging greater coordination and collaboration between the regional commissions be expanded to also include other close partners, in particular the Statistics Division, and sought the views of OIOS and the regional commissions thereon. A delegation sought clarification as to how the interaction might be improved and be more frequent and face-to-face, rather than merely through a conference call once every two months, as detailed in paragraph 46 of the report.

13. Several delegations emphasized that regional commissions should, upon request, align their support to national statistical capacities in conformity with national policies, standards and priorities and without compromising national ownership and leadership.

Conclusions and recommendations

14. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly endorse the recommendations contained in paragraphs 53 and 55 to 57. The Committee recommended that the General Assembly take note of the recommendation contained in paragraph 54.**

15. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly encourage the regional commissions to continue to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of their support to national statistical offices by streamlining coordination with Member States and within and among regional commissions.**

16. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly encourage the regional commissions to improve the effectiveness of their knowledge dissemination by developing measurable outreach strategies that guide the issuance of their knowledge products.**